

HARTGEN JUDITH A  
79 BUENOS AIRES 8103

UNCLASSIFIED 10/22/79 150028

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ACTION APA-15  
INFO CCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 PM-06 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
NSA-00 NSC-05 FA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 TFSF-00  
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE

SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 8103  
E.C. 12065 GDS 10-1-85 (FREEMAN, ANTHONY G.) OR-P  
RAGS MFOL, PGOV, SEUM, AR  
SUBJECT (U) MENENDEZ'S REVOLT ENDS IN FAILURE  
REF: BUENOS AIRES 0069 NOTAL  
SUMMARY: THE REVOLT BEGUN SEPTEMBER 28-29 BY  
GENERAL MENENDEZ TRIGGERED BY THE ARMY'S DECISION  
TO OBEY THE SUPREME COURT ORDER TO RELEASE PUBLISHER  
JACCO TIMBERMAN ENDED IN FAILURE SOME 40 HOURS LATER.  
MENENDEZ PRESUMABLY WILL BE RETIRED, ALTHOUGH THIS  
HAS NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED EXPLICITLY. THE IMMEDIATE  
RESULTS - TENTATIVELY - APPEAR TO BE THE STRENGTHENING  
OF ARMY COMMANDER VIOLA'S HAND, GREATER LIKELIHOOD  
THAT GALTIERI WILL SUCCEED VIOLA AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF  
OF THE ARMY AND FURTHER ENHANCEMENT OF THE PRINCIPLE

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F THE RULE OF LAW. END SUMMARY.  
(U) ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION NOW AVAILABLE,  
THE ARMY CRISIS OF THIS PAST WEEKEND BEGAN SOME  
TIME FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 28 WHEN III CORPS COMMANDER  
MENENDEZ ORDERED INTO CORDOBA LOYAL UNITS FROM  
OUTLYING DISTRICTS OF HIS COMMAND. ARMY HEADQUARTERS  
IN BUENOS AIRES BECAME AWARE OF THESE UNSCHEDULED  
MOVEMENTS LATE FRIDAY NIGHT. AROUND 3 AM SATURDAY  
ARMY COMMANDER VIOLA REPORTEDLY TALKED TO  
MENENDEZ BY PHONE AND, WHEN HE FAILED TO GET A  
SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION FOR THE TROOP DISPLACEMENTS,  
VIOLA TOLD MENENDEZ HE WAS RELIEVING HIM OF COMMAND.  
(U) FOLLOWING THIS CONVERSATION MENENDEZ SENT  
A TELEGRAM TO VIOLA (REFTEL) DEMANDING THE LATTER'S

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/PS  
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director  
(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny  
Exemption(s):  
Declassify: ( ) In Part (X) In Full  
( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to  
Date Declassify on Reason

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RESIGNATION AND AN HOUR LATER READ TO NEWSPAPERMEN,  
BOM HE HAD ASSEMBLED A FEW HOURS EARLIER, HIS  
FOUR-POINT STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR DEMANDING VIOLA'S  
RESIGNATION. MOVING QUICKLY, VIOLA DESPATCHED TWO  
STAFF OFFICERS TO CORDOBA TO TALK TO MENENDEZ (WHICH  
PROVED FRUITLESS) AND, HAVING NAME 5TH CORPS COMMANDER  
AGUIERO TO ASSUME CHARGE OF THE 3RD CORPS, HE ORDERED  
HE DISPLACED TROOP UNITS OF THE 3RD CORPS AREA BACK  
C THEIR HOME BASES AND SENT THE 4TH AIRBORNE BRIGADE  
UNDER THE COMMAND OF A VIOLA-LOYALIST TO SURROUND  
HE MILITARY LYCEUM WHERE MENENDEZ HAD TEMPORARILY  
BT OF HEADQUARTERS IN CORDOBA.

4 (U) MENENDEZ HOWEVER EVADED CAPTURE, SETTING  
HIS NEW REBEL HEADQUARTERS AT THE NCO SCHOOL  
IN THE NATIONAL GENDARMERIE (BORDER POLICE) IN  
ESUS MARIA ABOUT 70 KILOMETERS FROM CORDOBA.

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ITF HIM REPORTEDLY WERE ELEMENTS OF AN ENGINEERING  
ATTALION FROM LA PICJA, ELEMENTS OF AN ARTILLERY  
BOUT FROM SAN LUIS AND PRESUMABLY THE CADRES FROM  
HE MCC SCFOOL - IN ALL NO MORE THAN 1000 MEN.  
THROUGHTOUT SATURDAY, TROOPS LOYAL TO VIOLA CONVERGED  
N MENENDEZ'S REDOFT IN JESUS MARIA, TAKING UP  
IGIL AROUND THE PLACE AND PRACTICALLY CUTTING IT  
FF FROM THE OUTSIDE. VIOLA SENT 1ST CORPS COMMANDER  
ALTIERI TO CORDOBA, WHO EVIDENTLY WAS SUCCESSFUL  
N GETTING SOME OF THE TROOPS WITH MENENDEZ TO  
ESUBMIT TO VIOLA'S AUTHORITY.

10. (U) BY THE END OF THE DAY, APPARENTLY RECOGNIZING THAT HIS REBELLION HAD FAILED, MENENDEZ AGREED TO COME TO BUENOS AIRES FOR A FACEDOWN WITH VIOLA, EVIDENTLY AFTER RECEIVING GUARANTEES THAT HE WOULD NOT BE DETAINED IN BUENOS AIRES AND WOULD BE ABLE TO RETURN TO CORDOBA. THE VIOLA-MENENDEZ MEETING TOOK PLACE EARLY SUNDAY MORNING AT THE ARMY COMMAND IN BUENOS AIRES FOLLOWING WHICH MENENDEZ RETURNED TO CORDOBA, SECLUDING HIMSELF IN HIS RESIDENCE ON THE ARMY BASE THERE - THIS SIGNALING AN END TO THE BRIEF REBELLION WITHOUT A SHOT HAVING BEEN FIRED.

1. (U) LATE SATURDAY NIGHT WHILE THE OUTCOME OF THE ISSUE WAS STILL IN DOUBT VIOLA SENT A MESSAGE TO ALL THE ARMY AND GENDARMERIE UNITS IN THE COUNTRY EXHORTING THEM TO MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE AND SUBORDINATION TO MILITARY AUTHORITY AND AFFIRMING THAT THE ARMY WOULD FULFILL ITS COMMITMENTS UNDER THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION PROCESS, INCLUDING CONTINUING ON THE POLICE ROAD WHICH WE MUST TAKE TOWARDS FULL RULE OF LAW.

IF MENENDEZ HAD ANY COMMITMENTS OF SUPPORT

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PUENOS AIRES 8103

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FROM SENIOR COLLEAGUES IN THE ARMED FORCES EFFORT

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MAKING HIS ACTION, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THIS AT  
LL. ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL SUAREZ MASON, A  
ELLOW CAVALRY OFFICER AND "HARDLINER" ON THE ISSUE  
F SUBVERSION EVIDENTLY STAYED CLOSE TO VIOLA  
THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS - WHETHER OUT OF LOYALTY OR  
SENSE OF ALTERNATIVES IS NOT CLEAR. GENERAL FUSSI,  
EE HEAD OF THE GENDARMERIE WAS ON A VISIT-ABROAD DURING  
THESE EVENTS. AIR FORCE COMMANDER  
RAFFIGNA WAS ALSO OUT OF THE COUNTRY WHEN  
HE REBELLION BEGAN AND THE AIRFORCE AND NAVY STAYED  
OUT OF THE CONFLICT. ASKED BY REPORTERS IF HE HAD

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 PA-05 TRSF-00  
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M AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2611

NFO USCINCSO QUARRY ETS IMMEDIATE

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MEMBASSY ASUNCION IMMEDIATE

MEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE

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RIED TO GET AIR FORCE OR NAVY SUPPORT, MENENDEZ  
ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE IMPLYING THAT HE THOUGHT  
THE MAJORITY OF THE ARMY WOULD BACK HIM AFTER HE  
WAS UNDERWAY. MENENDEZ THUS EMERGES FROM THIS  
EPISODE AS A PRECIPITOUS, QUIXOTIC KAMIKAZE FIGURE  
FOLLOWING IN THE DUBIOUS FOOTSTEPS OF A CELEBRATED  
NCLF, GENERAL BENJAMIN MENENDEZ, WHO 20 YEARS AGO  
O THE DAY FAILED IN A REVOLT AGAINST PERON WHEN  
HE RAN OUT OF PETROL SUPPLIES. UNSUCCESSFUL REVOLTS,  
IT SEEMS, RUN IN THE FAMILY.

. (U) WHY DID HE DO IT? ASKED BY REPORTERS FOR AN  
EXPLANATION, MENENDEZ SAID THAT VIOLA HAD VEERED AWAY  
FROM THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE 1976 COUP, GIVING  
A TO OUTSIDE PRESSURES IN SUCH AREAS AS EDUCATION  
POLICY, THE ECONOMY, FOREIGN POLICY, AND TRADE UNION

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AFFAIRS. HE SPECIFICALLY CHARGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT  
HAD PREMATURELY ENDED THE WAR AGAINST ARMED SUB-  
VERSION IN AN APPARENT ALLUSION TO THE BOMBING OF  
SECRETARY KLEIN'S HOUSE AND REPORTS OF MONTONERO  
INFILTRATION IN THE COMMUNITY. HE COMPLAINED ABOUT  
THE COURTS HAVING RETURNED TO THEIR JOBS SUPERVISORS  
WHO EARLIER HAD BEEN FIRED AND PROTESTED THE FAILURE  
TO ERADICATE MARXISM, AND CORRUPTION AND TO LIMIT  
TRADE UNION POWER. BUT WHAT HE ZEROED IN ON WAS  
THE SUPREME COURT DECISION ON TIMBERMAN, SAYING IT  
WAS AN ACT OF WEAKNESS ON THE PART OF THE ARMY TO  
ALLOW THE SUPREME COURT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE  
1976 TO nullify A DISPOSITION OF THE JUNTA. THIS

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AS RIDICULOUS, HE SAID, SINCE THE JUNTA WAS BY ITS  
VERY NATURE AN UNCONSTITUTIONAL, DE FACTO, REVOLU-  
TIONARY BODY WHICH HAD TEMPORARILY ASSUMED THE  
SUPREME POWER OF THE NATION AND THEREFORE COULD  
NOT BE SUBJECT TO THE COURT'S AUTHORITY.

1. (U) PRESS COMMENTARY OVER THE WEEKEND, PROBABLY  
TO SOME DEGREE INSPIRED BY VICLA, STRESSED THAT  
MENENDEZ, A ROYALTY, HAD BEEN DISGRUNTLED WITH THE  
GOVERNMENT FOR SOME TIME. UNEASY WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S  
DECISION TO ACCEPT THE PAPAL OFFER TO MEDiate THE  
FAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE, HE TRIED TO PERSUADE HIS UNIT  
COMMANDERS TO DISOBEY THE ORDER FOR A STAND-DOWN  
BY THE TROOPS - ONLY TO BE TOLD BY THEM THAT HE  
WAS ALONE. AFTER HIS FRIEND AND CONFIDANT, GENERAL  
RETIREL) CHASSEING RESIGNED AS GOVERNOR IN CORDOBA  
OVER A BULGET DISPUTE WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT,  
MENENDEZ'S OPPOSITION REPORTEDLY DEEPENED. HE CAUSED  
STIR A FEW WEEKS AGO WHEN ORDERED TO MEET WITH THE  
INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. HE OBEYED,

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UT THEN COMPLAINED IN PUBLIC. THEN CAME THE TIMERMAN  
REAR AND THE ELFIN BOMBING.

2. (U) ON THE TIMERMAN QUESTION, PRESS ACCOUNTS  
OVER THE WEEKEND STRESSED THAT ALL THE SENIOR ARMY  
GENERALS OPPOSED TIMERMAN'S BEING FREED IN  
PRINCIPLE, VICLA INCLUDED. BUT THE QUESTION  
BEFORE THE ARMY WAS A DIFFERENT ONE: WHETHER OR  
NOT TO OBEY THE SUPREME COURT ORDER, WITH ALL THE  
NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF A JUDICIAL CRISIS IF THE  
JUNTA REJECTED THE COURT'S DECISION. IN THE END,  
ONLY ONE OTHER ARMY SENIOR GENERAL AGREED WITH  
MENENDEZ'S VIEW THAT THE SUPREME COURT DECISION  
WAS DEFIED - SUAREZ MASON.

3. [REDACTED] CALLED DERISIVELY BY SOME A TYPICAL  
19TH CENTURY ARGENTINE CAVALRY OFFICER, MENENDEZ  
IS KNOWN FOR HIS SWIFT SWORD IN THE REPRESSION OF  
SEVERSION IN HIS AREA. HE WAS ARBITRARY AND  
VICULANT, AS HIS HANDLING OF THE PANERO AND LOKMAN  
CASES ATTESTS. BUT HIS REPRESSION WAS MORE OPEN  
AND ACKNOWLEDGED THAN THAT IN BUENOS AIRES. THERE  
IS LESS CYNICISM AND FEWER "DISAPPEARANCES". AS  
HIMSELF WAS WONT TO SAY, MENENDEZ IS NOT A  
SCIST. PRESS COMMENTARY OVER THE WEEKEND TOOK  
INS TO EMPHASIZE THAT HIS TOUGH STAND AGAINST  
THE TIMERMAN RELEASE WAS NOT MOTIVATED BY ANTI-  
MITISM AND THAT HE EVIDENTLY REGARDS HIMSELF  
A "DEMOCRAT" WHO FAVORS A POLITICAL OPENING.  
THOUGH IT IS APPARENT THAT HE IS POLITICALLY NAIVE.  
A PRESS COMMENTATOR IMPLIED THAT MENENDEZ REACHED

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HIS DECISION TO MOVE AGAINST VIOLA ONLY AFTER VIOLA  
MADE IT CLEAR EARLIER LAST WEEK THAT HE WAS GOING  
TO PICK "A POLITICAL SOLDIER" TO REPLACE HIMSELF  
AT THE END OF THIS YEAR, IE THAT HE HAD NO  
INTENTION OF PICKING MENENDEZ.

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11. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATION OF MENENDEZ'S  
SHORT LIVED REBELLION? AT FIRST BLUSH - AND THIS  
MUST REMAIN A TENTATIVE VIEW - MENENDEZ A PRE-  
CIPITOUS ACTION WOULD HAVE APPEARED TO HAVE BLOWN  
IT FOR SUAREZ MASON AND THE HARDLINERS. THE  
SUBSTANCE OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN MENENDEZ AND  
VIOLA YESTERDAY MORNING IS NOT YET KNOWN, NOR  
WHETHER VIOLA MADE ANY ACCOMMODATIONS TO MENENDEZ'S  
POINT OF VIEW. HOWEVER, VIOLA SEEMS TO HAVE ALL  
THE CARDS AND MENENDEZ PRESUMABLY BE RETIRED.  
UNLESS THERE IS A HARSH BACKLASH, WHICH WE DO NOT  
SEE IN EVIDENCE AS OF THIS WRITING (BUT WHICH NEW TERRORIST  
INCIDENTS COULD PRODUCE), WE BELIEVE THAT  
IF ABORTED MENENDEZ REVOLT ENHANCES THE PROSPECTS  
OR VIOLA'S PROCEEDING WITH THE SELECTION OF GALTIERI  
S HIS SUCCESSOR OR ALTERNATIVELY EXTENDING HIS  
TERM AS ARMY COMMANDER, AS HE SEES FIT. THE MENENDEZ  
EFFECT ALSO IMPLIES ENHANCEMENT OF PROSPECTS FOR  
MOVING FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD TOWARDS A RETURN TO  
THE RULE OF LAW.

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